

A
SERMON

Preached at the

CATHEDRAL-CHURCH

IN

HEREFORD,

On the 8th of MARCH, 17¹³/₁₄.

Being the

ANNIVERSARY-DAY
Of Her MAJESTY'S Happy
Accession to the THRONE.

By H. LEWIS D.D. Prebendary of the said
Church, and Chaplain to his GRACE the
Duke of ORMOND.

Published at the Request of the Reverend the
CANON then in Residence.

LONDON: Printed for R. Wilkin, at the King's-
Head in St. Paul's Church Yard. MDCCXIV.

Price 4 d.

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IN

H E R E F O R D, &c.

PSAL. CXXXiii. I.

*Behold how good and pleasant a Thing it is, for
Brethren to dwell together in Unity.*

WHEN Christianity first began to appear
in the World, Unity, and Peace, and
Love, were the Principles that recom-
mended it in the Lives of its Professors,
and render'd it as *Amiable*, as it was *Profitable* to Man-
kind. But when Men brought their Lusts and Passions
into the Profession of the Gospel, and a Self-Interest
was discover'd in the Warmth of Dispute, it could not
be help'd, but that the World must soon be filled with
Divisions and Animosities, and Quarrels arise betwixt
Persons.

Persons of *meer* Design and Intrigue, and those who were Zealous for Truth, and made up of a better Temper.

For, it being incident both to the One and the Other, as well to Persons of Discontented Spirits, as the Real Patrons of Truth and Peace, to Preface all their Actions with a pretence of Zeal for publick Tranquillity; and Men being naturally inclin'd to meditate their own Defence, and the Justification of their different Sentiments, they usually believe, that the most Compendious Way to it, is to weaken the Reputation of those who differ from them; which must needs create on both Sides the hottest Jealousie, the most sinister Interpretation of each others Actions, and give Birth to Leagues and Parties, which are the Bane of all Society, and beget such sowre and ill-natur'd Principles, as utterly suffocate those Breathings of Charity, which the Primitive Ages were so eminent for.

Let the Foundations of any Government be never so strongly and firmly laid; be it's Constitution never so Excellent, built on the wisest Maxims, guided by the most prudent Counsels, and supported by the most wholesome Laws; yet if the Disturbance and Intestine Dissentions, raised by the Cunning and Artifice of Restless and Self-designing Men, be not timely and prudently stop'd, they will soon overthrow its prosperous and flourishing State, and produce Mischiefs of the last Importance.

Though the Church of Christ, which is purely a Spiritual Kingdom, be establish'd upon the Immoveable Rock of Eternal Truth and Goodness, and against which, as such, the Gates of Hell shall never prevail, yet our Blessed Saviour and all his Apostles, being well acquainted with the Inclinations and Passions of humane Nature, and knowing that the Church, as all other Societies, must suffer in its External Polity, by the mutual Animosities and Divisions of its Members, do therefore with the strictest Application, caution Men against that dangerous and turbulent Zeal, that breeds

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breeds Enmity and Contention ; and that in all Matters of Debate and Controversie, they still have a Regard to that Love and peaceable Disposition, which is the *Defence*, as well as *Ornament* of Religion, is *profitable* as well as *pleasant* to behold, and to which, in both these Respects, the Psalmist may very properly be said, most pathetically to exhort, and encourage our Practice, in the Words of his Triumphant Song ; *Behold, how good and pleasant a Thing it is, for Brethren to dwell together in Unity.*

This Psalm, as the general Opinion is, was Composed by *David*, upon his being Crowned King of *Israel*, by the Concurrence of the Ten Tribes at *Hebron*, (2 *Sam.* v. 3.) as about two Years and an half before he had by two Tribes been made King of *Judab*. (2 *Sam.* ii. 4.) There was now an unanimous Consent and Agreement amongst all the Tribes, to set up, and obey *David* as their King, and after near three Years Divisions and Party-Combats, concerning the Succession to the *Jewish* Throne in the House of *Saul*, he being Dead, and his Family rejected by God, both those who had so long appeared for the House of *Saul*, and strove to maintain the Hereditary Right of Succession in his Family, and those who justly maintained the Divine Designation of *David* to the Throne, do now mutually resolve, laying aside all former State-Quarrels and Animosities, to unite in the same common Interest and Concern for Publick Safety, under *David* their King ; who rising up the great Deliverer of the *Jewish* Church and State, from the extremest Oppression, both in their Religious and Civil Rights, nothing less than a Crown was thought an equal Reward for so glorious a Merit : Neither was the *Jus Divinum* of *Saul's* Title ever put in as a Bar, to the more deserving present Possessor ; but the same Providence watched over him, and by its Ministers required the same Allegiance to him, as to the former Possessor of the *Jewish* Crown.

Hereupon the Royal Psalmist in a rapturous Admiration of that Unity and Concord, which now Cemented

ed all the late Contending Tribes of *Israel* about their Government, Composed this Psalm, wherein he recommends to them, and all succeeding Societies of Men, Peace and Unanimity, as the best Expedient to render themselves Happy, and defeat the Designs and Attempts of their Enemies. *Behold, says he, how good and pleasant a Thing it is, for Brethren to dwell together in Unity.*

I need not waste time in setting forth the Advantages of Peace and Union, since our own imprudent Divisions, both in Church and State, must needs have made us sensible of them in the Want thereof, and open to our View a melancholly Scene of Things, whilst we behold those who worship the same God and common Saviour, and pursue the same great End and Designs of Religion, opposing, reviling, and separating from each other, and acting the Parts of most inveterate Enemies; as if Friendship and good Will were Duties of no Moment, and Men could not express their Love to God more effectually, than by their Hatred to their Neighbour. I shall therefore lay down these two Propositions, as comprized within the Compass and Meaning of the Words.

- I. That Unity and Agreement amongst its Members, is the only thing that can preserve any Society from Ruine.
- II. That 'tis the Duty of every one, in his respective Place, or Calling, to endeavour to promote the Peace and Happiness of that Society, to which he belongs.

Which Propositions having so close a Connexion with and Dependence on each other, I shall not consider them separately and apart, but both together, not doubting but their Force and Evidence will appear, by handling them in this following Method.

I. By

- I. By shewing what that Unity is, which the Royal Psalmist here recommends as pleasant and profitable.
- II. By proposing some Means or Expedients, for the securing of publick Peace and Unity.
- III. Which having dispatch'd, I shall proceed in the Third and Last Place, to conclude the whole, with a Word or two, in reference to the Occasion of our present Meeting.

I. *First*, I am to shew, what that Unity is, which the Psalmist here recommends as Pleasant and Profitable. And to be sure to come within the Sense and Meaning of these Words, I shall consider it as generally understood in a three-fold Acceptation.

- First*, For Unity of Judgment in Matters of Faith.
- 2dly*, For Unity in External Worship or Communion.
- 3dly*, For Unity of Affection, Good-will, and Charity.

First, For Unity of Judgment in Matters of Faith. Notwithstanding there is a vast Difference in men's Judgments and Capacities of Apprehending Things abstracted from Matter, That Proposition oftentimes being dark and obscure to one Man, which to another appears under all the Advantages of Light and Credibility; yet that every one should be fully determin'd and fix'd in his Belief of the Principles of Religion, is absolutely necessary to Salvation.

But to expect this from Men, in Points of meer Notion and Speculations of Religion, and the Modes of expressing themselves about the Doctrines they heartily believe, (which indeed, but too often, are the main Topicks in debate, and which perhaps, if rightly apprehended, would be found to mean one and the same Thing,) is very Unreasonable and Absurd, because 'tis not in the Power of Man to Believe or Disbelieve as he pleases himself, his Understanding being limited and bound up by the eternal Rules of Truth and Falshood; that is, he can't possibly prevail upon his understanding to

to Believe that Proposition to be True, which he Believes to be False, nor on the contrary, to acquiesce in that as False, which he Believes to be True: And therefore for any Sect or Party of Men to expect a Compliance from others, in Matters of this Nature, is purely the result of Fever and Phrenzy, and which Persons of sound Health and Judgment will never hope for; because no Man can be obliged to any Thing of impossible Performance; as this will still continue to be, whilst Men are framed with different Capacities of Apprehending, and for want of Learning, and the proper Methods of Enquiry, are Content to be Ignorant of what they are not necessarily bound to know. And 'twill ever be thought very Hard, by all sober and considering Christians, that Men should be persecuted, and condemned to Fire and Faggot, and all the Torments of a Bloody Inquisition, meerly because they can't raise their Conceptions to the Standard of those Men's Judgments, who pretend to have the Government and Direction of their Consciences; very Hard, that People should have their Brains beaten out, purely because their Heads are not of the same Size with theirs that would beat them out; and is just as ridiculous and unreasonable, as it would be for a Man to Quarrel with all the People he meets with, because they have not the same Complexion, Features, and Symmetry in their Faces, as he has.

For the most part, Men's Affections do insensibly govern their Judgments; they are inclin'd to some Opinions more than to others, either from their Complexion and Temper, or the Force of Education, or the Insinuations of Acquaintance; and not being able to Judge of Speculative Points according to the known Rules of Arguing, by considering the Strength and Clearness of the Evidence on both Sides, and the Conclusions resulting from granted Principles, they will consider Things in Gross only, and suffer themselves to be byass'd by the Prejudices of Education, Custom, Conversation, and the like, which we find have a

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mighty Influence upon Men's Fancies, and strongly incline them to approve of one Party of Men, and their Opinions, more than others. And this is chiefly owing to Men's Ignorance, and want of understanding the Sense and Meaning of Scripture, which is the Rule of the Christian Faith, but not all of the same Nature, nor written by one Man, in the same Method and Style, but is filled in some places with Advices and Counsels, in others with Precepts and Commands, and in many with Dark and Enigmatical Prophecies, full of Figurative Expressions, affecting high and tumid Metaphors, bold Comparisons, and excessive Hyperboles, Aggravations, and lofty Strains of Oriental Rhetorick, utterly unknown to the Unlearned, and not without the utmost Pains and Labour acquired by the Learned.

Besides, we know in one Church, the People are denied the Use of the Holy Scriptures, are forbid to read them; and in all others, for want of Parts, and Learning, and Application to Books, Men are generally ignorant, and easily impos'd upon and led into the dark; and many who rehearse their Creed every Day, yet are Infidels to the Belief of some things contained therein; and although a good Christian, that heartily believes the Scriptures, and sincerely endeavours to understand them aright, and to lead his Life according to them, may be well assured, that God will keep him from all Errors that are destructive of his Salvation; yet because Error is so various, and so many new and strange Hypotheses are daily broach'd, every new Book almost presenting us with New Schemes and different Maxims of Theology; I say, these things being considered, it appears to be as impossible, as it is unnecessary, that all should have the same Thoughts and Apprehensions, and conceive of all places in the Scripture after the same way and manner.

So that till all Men are cast in the same Mould, and have all equally the same Spirit of Knowledge and Understanding, to distinguish and judge of Truth and Error,

we must despair of ever seeing Unity in Faith, in this Notion of it, become universal ; tho' it will still be so in the best and truest Sense, whilst Men Agree in all the Fundamentals of the Christian Faith, which is not a whit alter'd nor the worse, though a little varied in some nicer Speculations, as the Heavens are not less Influential, and so not less to be admired, because of the vast disproportion of the Cœlestial Bodies, because *one Star differeth from another Star in Glory and Magnitude.*

The Application of this Point, with respect to the Disputes which divide *Papists* from *Protestants*, and those of Protestants among themselves, is obvious. The difference betwixt the former lies in the very Essentials or Fundamentals of Religion, and no Protestant can safely unite with them in their Faith, unless they will forfeit their Peace with God and their own Consciences, which ought to be prefer'd before all other Considerations.

The Church of *Rome* which we have long since justly departed from, is acknowledged, and unanswerably proved, to be an Idolatrous Church, with which none can safely Communicate, but at the hazard of their Eternal Salvation : The Doctrines that she would impose upon us, are false and groundless, and have not the least Foundation in Scripture, being Calculated to serve the Ends of Ambition and Covetousness, and which Men can never believe, before they have renounced their Reason and their Senses, can swallow Contradictions, and are become ten times more the Children of the Devil, than they were by Nature.

So that if any be saved in that Idolatrous Church, we do not believe it is for the Goodness of that Religion, which, it is plain, lays the most base and servile Yoke upon the Souls and Consciences of Men ; but it is from the Goodness of God, which makes great Allowances for the Ignorance and Simplicity of Men's Minds, and may probably be induced to *forgive* those *Errors*, that they may not be *sensible* they are guilty of.

But surely that Church can challenge no great Honour to itself, whose Members can promise themselves

no more than a bare Possibility of Salvation in it; and wherein nothing but a Man's Ignorance of the Idolatry of it, can skreen him from Damnation: For how dangerous must that Man's Condition be, who continues in the exercise of an unlawful Worship, at the same time that he believes, and is convinced of it's being such? He can't, most certainly, any longer profess it with safety, than he is Ignorant of it, or knows not that God has provided more rational and just Methods for his Instruction and Salvation.

But the Case is quite different as to the Controversies that are on Foot between Protestants themselves, for they are generally about Things of an Indifferent Nature, which a Man may Believe or Disbelieve at his Pleasure, and without any Danger to his future Happiness: No necessary Article of Faith, no Fundamental in Religion, no first Principle of Christianity, which a Man is bound to believe as necessary to Salvation, is the Subject of their Disputes, which therefore do not truly and really affect Religion; and whether their Notions about them be true or false, yet as long as both Sides agree in their belief of all the Necessary Articles of Christian Faith, these Controversies about less weighty Points can't prejudice their great and main Concern; and we are charitably to hope, they may at last all safely come to Heaven, though at present they may differ in their Opinions about the *Way* thither.

II. The next sort of Unity to be consider'd, is Unity of Communion, or Church-Unity; which is nothing else but Men's Agreeing to Worship God together in the same manner and Congregation, joining in the same Divine Ordinances and Religious Institutions, which are the Badges that distinguish Christians from all other Sects of Religion; This is what is highly incumbent upon all the Professors of Christianity to endeavour after, and what does very much tend to the Good and Prosperity of Christ's Church.

And consequently it must be no small Trouble, as

well as Surprize, to a good Man, to observe those who are united in their Belief of the same necessary and fundamental Articles of Salvation, and do agree in the same common Faith and Essentials of Religion, yet dividing Communion, and standing at a very wide and great distance from each other in trivial Matters, raising Storms and Tempests about their Heads, from little Clouds no bigger than a Man's Hand. Whilst the Worship of *Papists* continues to be Sinful and Idolatrous, and it will continue to be such as long as with what is good in it, they join such impure Mixtures as the Scriptures utterly forbid, such as the Worshipping of Images and Pictures, Adoring a Wafer, or a Piece of Bread, for God, praying to the Virgin *Mary*, to Saints, and Angels, as Intercessors with Christ, our only Mediator and Advocate; I say, whilst Things continue thus in the *Roman Church*, we can't with Safety Communicate with it: But all Protestants Agree in the same one Object of Divine Worship, have the same Mediator, observe the same Divine Institutions, without any essential Change or Alteration, and yet (what is strange and almost unaccountable) they can't Consent to be Uniform in their Approaches to the same Divine Majesty.

But the Wonder rises still higher, if we observe with what Rancour and Bitterness, with what Heat and Animosities, the Controversies betwixt them, which are generally of Things but of an indifferent Nature, are carried on, and blown up to such a height, with such Names of Reproach, invidious Reflections, and scandalous Misrepresentations, that in the midst of Peace and Plenty we seem to be in a Posture of War, and without the help of Inspiration, may easily foretel the Event of such disingenuous Practices, or if we can't, our Blessed Lord will instruct us, That *a Kingdom divided against itself cannot stand.*

No Error has been more common than that of Misrepresenting the Terms of Religion. The great Principle of Self-love is apt to precipitate our Judgment in
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spiritual, as well as debauch our Affections in temporal Matters : Hence 'tis no unusual Thing to observe Men with a great deal of Warmth and Zeal contending for a profitable Error, whilst an important Truth, that's contrary to their Interest, can find no Advocate.

And thus 'tis easie to account for that discontent, hatred, and uneasiness that are amongst Men, that they are jealous and shy of one another's Company, are uncharitable in their Censures of each other, and too apt to impute the Defects of their Understandings to the perverseness of their Wills, and in a Word, that whilst they strive about useles and insignificant Notions, which have no tendency to render a Man either Wiser or Better, they so easily forget our Saviour's Command, of *Loving one another*.

It can't be deny'd, but that Christianity is the greatest Security of the Peace and Happiness of Government, both in its Precepts and Examples, gives the strictest Commands, and largest Encouragement for the Preservation of Unity and Love, amongst its Members, that can be : But notwithstanding all this, Experience tells us, that when People are divided into Parties and Factions upon the account of Religion, there's nothing more embitters Men's Spirits against each other, divides their Affections, obstructs their Counsels for publick Safety, and by that means gives the common Enemy too much Advantage against us, and is an Evidence of our Folly, even to a Degree of Infatuation.

And yet tho' the World be naturally Foolish enough, yet it is not to be suppos'd, that meer Folly could carry such a Madness so far ; there is some other Cause to be sought for, something that lyes behind the Curtain, and does us Mischief in the Dark. I mean the secret Practices of the Emissaries and Factors of the Church of Rome, who walk thro' the Kingdom in several Disguises, are an Insinuating, Cunning, and Dangerous Sort of Persons, whose Business is to disturb us, by blowing up the Coals of Division, and becoming Incendiaries

incendiaries on both Sides ; so that without a Miracle of Providence in our Favour, the common Enemy, who by long Experience knows how to manage our Passions, and to gratify the Inclinations of some Men, will be able to find their Account therein, by offering Both the contending Parties, as a general Sacrifice to the Fury of that Church, which has been often *drunk with the Blood of the Saints*.

For since they have little Reason to hope either for our Destruction by plain and open Force, or for our Conversion by Dint of Argument and Reason, they have not unsuccessfully attempted to beget unnatural Animosities and Divisions amongst us, by playing Protestants against Protestants, and putting them upon the unnatural Method of *contending for the Faith* at the Expence of their Peace, that they might be unhappy one way or other.

But 'tis a Phrenzy, and a fatal Mistake we are expos'd to, being in Danger of losing *Both*, by parting with *One*: For Knowledge and Love, when true, do still unite, and are Concomitants to each other; they are Infinite in God, and inseparable in every good Christian, who by a just Manage and Contemperation of Both, may contend for the Truth, and yet not violate his Charity.

And 'tis strange it should be otherwise, for Truth leaves a spiritual Gust upon the Understanding, which does mightily influence and incline the Will to every Thing that is good ; and as Truth is the Object of the One, so Goodness is the Object of the other ; both which do directly tend to Cure our sowre and ill-natur'd Principles, to make us Happy in both Worlds, this and the next.

And altho' Truth be not always Familiar and Obvious to every common Enquiry, yet to be sure, 'tis not to be met with in Thunder and Whirlwinds, clamorous Disputes and furious Zeal, but in soft Whispers, and the still small Voice of Love, Meekness, and Humanity, the gentler Methods of the Gospel. Whoever acts

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upon less generous Principles, and with an implacable, unchristian Spirit, will soon betray the Self-Interest that lies at the bottom, and discover his Stanchness in the Controversy, to be wholly the Dreg of Education; his mighty Zeal, the Sowness of a Party; and his publick Spiritedness, a thin Disguise for black Designs.

Tho' some may be so Sanguine as to Ridicule our Fears and just Apprehensions of Popery, when they themselves, at the same time, according to the natural tendency of Things, are bringing us under its Tyranny again, by speaking favourably of it, and making it a soft and harmless Thing; and are so in love with their private Sentiments, as to believe there's no very wide Distance between the Protestant and Popish Church, at least, that it is an easy Matter to Unite in some particulars, and to carry on the Disputes betwixt them, without Prejudice to Religion in general, or Violation of our common Charity; yet I believe, as it will be found upon Examination, that there's the same Distance betwixt the Popish and Protestant Faith, as there is between East and West, Heaven and Earth, Truth and Falshood, so will it also appear from Experience, that when Controversies are set on foot in behalf of a false Worship and Religion, as there must be some private End and Design at the Bottom, so will Passion be apt to slide in under the fair Pretext of Truth, lay Claim to Conscience itself, and it will become a Piece of Zeal to be uncharitable.

And it often proves so difficult a Matter to distinguish betwixt Passion and Zeal, that the undiscerning Multitude, have many times been led blind fold into a Liking of some Men's Actions, have adored them as Patriots of their Country, been charm'd with the Vigour of their Counsels, and the Fury of their Zeal; when at the same time, others of a truer Judgment and deeper Penetration of Thought, have discover'd Picque and Discontent to lie at the Bottom of all, have taken notice of private Passion and Interest lurking behind the thin Pageantry and Shew of Conscience, Pride

Pride and Ambition disguised under the venerable Names of Honour and Publick Spirit, Zeal for a Party and a Self-Interest miscalled Zeal for Publick Good, and have heard the Members of the *Roman* Church grievously complaining of Persecution, when 'tis merely for want of Power in themselves to persecute.

Passion is as ill a Counsellor in Matters of Religion, as in those of the State; and when Humor and Self-Love engage in the Quarrel, they produce a World of Mischiefs, and are like ill Humours in the Body, which make any *small* Wound *Dangerous*, and a *great* one *Mortal*.

But where Conscience is really the governing Principle in such Cases, 'twill exert it self in not suffering our different Notions to grow up into Personal Hatred and Animosities, which, we can't but observe, is at present the too visible Result of an intemperate Zeal, and is such a Prejudice as naturally inflames Men to Revenge, is the Diversion of such as ridicule all Religion, and causes such a Languishing, and Mistrust in its Principles, as utterly to destroy the Practice of its Duties.

When therefore Religion is really the Ground of any Differences, it will instruct Men to behave themselves towards those who differ from them in Opinion or Judgment, with Modesty and Humility, and with such an universal Love and Charity, that though our Opinions still continue divided, yet we shall keep our Charity entire, and so continue at least to be united in Affection, though we can't in Understanding: For *Thirdly* and *Lastly*,

III. There is an Unity of Love and Charity, to which we are Eternally obliged, whatever Accidental Differences may happen amongst us in Matters of Opinion, tho' it is too often seen, that Differences in Men's Judgments do commonly divide them in their Affections likewise. But when it so falls out, that they are Matters of Religion about which Men disagree, which

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Some way or other, tho' perhaps not always directly and immediately tend to Salvation, about which every one is naturally very careful, and would secure himself of, by such manner as he thinks most proper, which notwithstanding may be false and mistaken; yet some Men do it, as 'tis to be hoped out of meer Concern for their Souls, and 'tis their Misfortune to lye under the Prejudices of Education, and a Misinform'd Judgment; therefore in such Cases, we ought to make all just Allowances for the Weakness and Infirmities of Human Nature, and not suffer our Zeal to degenerate into Rage and Barbarity, but study with Meekness to *inform them in the way in which they should go*, whereby we may by degrees help to remove their Mistakes, and with them their Prejudices against us; of which this will be the happy Consequence, that besides a more hearty Veneration for the Truth, they will be apt also to entertain a more sincere and affectionate Respect for us. 'Tis not only a Permission, but a Command to Christians, to be *zealously affected in a good Cause*, and much concerned in every Thing that relates to our well-being hereafter, and to those Means that dispose and lead us to it here; but they are expressly cautioned against a bitter Zeal, and a *Zeal without Knowledge*, which is so very bad, as to be reckoned amongst the Works of the Flesh, and is as easily discovered as any of the rest.

A little Reflection upon our selves, and our private Intentions will soon resolve the Point, whether 'tis Malice and Revenge for some Injury supposed or real; whether Discontent at our own Disappointments, or Envy at others Advancement; whether it be some secret Design and private End that we disguise with the Name of Zeal, or a sincere Affection to Religion, and the Happiness of our Brethren, that is the ruling Principle within; and if upon such a review, it appears to be the Off-spring of a private and discontented Spirit; let Men call it what they please, 'tis no true Zeal, but the Phrenzy and Calenture of Religion,
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which is directly opposite to the meek and gentle Temper of the Gospel, is destructive of all sober Counsel, and prudent Resolves, and precipitates Men into those extravagant and unwarrantable Attempts which Religion severely prohibits.

If the Profession of the Gospel be not tempered with that gentleness and meekness of Spirit, which can make Men easy under Opposition, patient of Injuries, and ready to forgive; that can suppress an insulting Passion, stop the Emissions of Anger, and check the impetuous Sallies of the Blood; it is a sign that it has not had any real influence or change upon our Hearts, that either we are still ignorant of its Peaceful Nature, or deaf to its divine Institutions; which, to be sure whatever Relief or Satisfaction it may bring to a Man at present, does certainly betray him to those future Retributions of Vengeance, which are justly due to such disguised Ignorance, to such insuperable Obstinacy, and to those present Mischiefs, which are caused by both.

The holy Psalmist, who instructs us from Divine Inspiration, gives us the Character of such, on whom the Spirit of God has the most kindly influence, they are the *meek and gentle*, those that are *meek will be guided in Judgment*, and *such as are gentle, them shall he learn his Way*. A meek, humble, and gentle Disposition, is soon wrought on by the persuasions of God's Spirit, and will readily receive such Impressions as he would imprint upon it; such Persons will be guided by his Directions, excited by its Promises, and amended by its Reproofs.

And this will appear in the due regulation of all those Faculties of the Soul, over which Meekness has an influence, the Understanding, Will, and Affections: That of the Understanding, consists in a pliability to Conviction, That of the Will, in being governed equally and consonantly to Reason, and that of the Affections, in reducing the Passions to a calm and orderly Temper.

And I am fully persuaded, where Men can thus conquer their Aversions (and all are bound to endeavour it) where they can bring themselves to this cool and sober Temper, when they can bear a Contradiction, without flying into unwarrantable Heats and Fury; they will do more Service, and bring greater Honour and Credit to Religion, tho' they should happen to be in the wrong, than all the Noise and Clamours that others can make in its Defence, tho' they should be in the right: For the Gospel knows no Heats nor Fire, but that which is kindled at God's Altar, that of Love to God, and Charity to our Neighbour, which is best express'd by Obedience in ourselves to Him, and in our Industry to promote the Knowledge of Him with others, by all Lawful and Prudent Means,

And those are only to be accounted such, which carry Love, Compassion, and Sweetness with them, the genuine Temper of the Gospel, by which alone our blessed Saviour overcame the hardness and stubborn Opposition of the *Jewish* Converts, and which will still be able to produce the like Effects, as being both more suitable to that Divine Compassion and Tenderness, and most likely to induce Men to come as near it as they can in their Practice.

To dispute or argue about any Matter in debate, is not only Lawful, but sometimes necessary, when Truth is like to suffer by Error, and to be oppressed for want of Evidence to rescue it; but then we are to be hugely cautious, this be done in the Spirit of Love, that no Passion nor private Interest mix it self in the Controversy, least while we contend for the Truth, we lose both that and our Peace together.

It is not so much to be considered, what are the Grounds of Men's Differences and Contests in Matters of Religion, as what is the Temper with which they are managed; Things of great Moment may be managed by Persons of calm and prudent Tempers, in so soft a manner, that none of their Differences shall be able to divide them: And the most inconsiderable

Things possible, may by the ill-natur'd Sophistry of angry Men, be raised up to seem Matters of the greatest moment: For 'tis but fastening an ill Name or an ill Opinion, that will do it: And Controversies sometimes have been thus uncharitably managed, and Men's Opinions misunderstood, and their Words wrested to a wrong Sense, and the Mistakes of a few imputed as the Judgment of a whole Party, and all things put into Disorder and Confusion, for want of Temper and wise Management, and an inflexible regard to the Laws of Justice and Charity.

These two Graces, however not well considered nor understood by Persons of a fierce and implacable Spirit, will be found to be a Blessing, as well as Duty of the Gospel, as they cure our Discontents, silence our Quarrels, calm our Passions, and free us from the Tortures and Corrosives of Anger, Jealousy, and Envy, the greatest Monster of all, that unnaturally feeds upon it self.

But if we suffer the Root of Bitterness to spring up and trouble us, and when we *bite and devour one another*, we then recede from our Ease and Happiness, we contribute as much as in us lies, to make our selves miserable, and when 'tis too late may repent we had not taken the Apostle's Advice, who cautions us *to take heed, that we be not devoured of one another*; which must be an Unhappiness, of all others the most Deplorable, because it renders us ridiculous as well as miserable, and gives Occasion to People, instead of pitying our Divisions, to laugh at our Folly.

2. I come in the next Place to the Second General of the Text, *viz.* To propose some Methods for the obtaining of Concord and Unity, and I shall instance in these Two,

I. A serious Uniform Practice of our holy Religion.

II. Contentment and Acquiescence in our Condition, minding our own Business, and not intermed-

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ling in those Things that do not immediately relate to us.

I. A serious Uniform Practice of Religion, is an undoubted Method of preserving Concord and Unity, as it teaches the Government both of our Intellectual and Bodily Appetites, and instructs us to live in the World, with an unreprouable Innocence and Virtue. It is the great unhappiness of human Nature, to be most mistaken in the Things that do most nearly concern it: And hence amongst the many Expedients proposed, both by Moralists and Divines, for the right formation of the Mind, and the advancement of its Virtuous and Religious Dispositions; we find their first Attempt is to correct those Enormities and boisterous Passions, that are the certain Enemies to all Happiness and settled Contentment.

And this is the very Business of Religion, which is not more reasonable in it self and greatest Principles, than Important in its Aims and mighty Consequences, being so wisely adapted for the perfecting of the Human Nature in all its Relations and Capacities, that it makes our Duty to become our Happiness, and directs to such a prudent Manage of our selves, as is naturally apt to promote a calm and peaceful Life.

This indeed, is what the great Law of Nature prompts every one to, to love his Country and promote its Happiness, and for his *Brethren and Companions sakes to seek its good*. Yet since in this depraved and imperfect State, we are but too apt to erase even the strongest Impressions of eternal Righteousness, originally stamp'd upon the Soul, for the sake of our Profit or our Pleasure; therefore besides the Dictates of meer natural Reason, the All-wise God hath thought fit to establish our Obligations of Conformity by the severest Sanctions of Eternal Rewards and Punishments, has laid the strictest Ties on Men's Consciences to observe those Homilitical, or Publick Virtues of Conversation,

on, which tend to the good of others as well as themselves, and are the Result of that Eternal Reason that is founded on the Holiness of the Divine Nature.

To this Purpose, 'tis obvious to observe, what severe Restraints Religion lays upon all the unreasonable Lusts and Passions of Men, how it reforms all the Powers of the Soul, and all the most secret and inward Motions that depend on them. How, on the one hand, it encourages Industry and Diligence in our several Callings, whereby Wealth, and Riches, and Honour are produced, which are the Glory and Bulwark of a Kingdom, as those Virtues are of a thriving and multiplying Nature, and the Advantages whereof without a Command, are an Obligation. How it requires Integrity and Faithfulness in Men, which are the best Qualifications for Publick Employments, and the truest Methods for Preferment. How it teaches Meekness, Humility, and Contentment, which fit Men for Society, and procure Esteem and Veneration; Honesty and upright Dealing, the great Allurements to Trade and Commerce; and Justice and Charity, which tie Men fast together in the mutual Engagements of serving and doing good to each other. How it recommends a gentle and flexible Temper, as that which will render them easy and acceptable to their Equals, and dispose them to obey all Lawful Commands of their Superiours. In a Word, how it enjoins the Government of our Bodily Appetites and Passions, by the Rules of Sobriety, Temperance, and Chastity, which are very Noble and Ornamental Virtues, for if it hates even the *Garment spotted by the Flesh*, much more does it abhor the Lust that gives the Pollution.

Now the Practice of these, and such like Duties, would effectually secure us from abundance of Mischiefs and dangerous Confusions, under which, that State or Nation must necessarily Sicken, grow Languid, and Decay, where they are not in some tolerable measure

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regarded ; nor can we ever hope to be Blessed with Unanimity in our Counsels, Agreement in our Measures, and joint Endeavours for publick Safety, without a general Conformity to the Prescriptions of our Holy Religion, which aims at the Good and Happiness of Mankind in all its tendencies, by offering to rescue us, as well from living as perishing in our Sins.

This is still capable of farther Improvement, if we proceed to consider, on the other Hand, how great an Enemy Christianity is to those Vices, which are naturally and more immediately productive of publick Woe and Misery, as all are, in a higher or lower degree, at one time or another. For does not Pride and Luxury first Bankrupt Men's Estates and Fortunes, and then render them Uneasie and Discontented, and disposed to Faction and Sedition ? Are not Spight, and Revenge, and Jealousies of each other, the certain and Necessary Consequences of Covetousness, and Ambition, and a Narrow Spirit ? Do not Oppression, Injustice, and Violence, beget in the Minds of the Injur'd the keenest Hatred and Resentments against him *who dealeth in proud Wrath*, and put them upon all Occasions of reaping their Satisfaction and Comfort in the Retaliation of the same or the like Gauling Provocations ? Do not Uncleannefs and Debauchery emasculate the Spirits of the bravest Men, disarm them of their Courage and Strength, lay them open to publick Scorn and Insults, the Objects of Scandal and Ridicule ? Do Pains and Diseases bring a Waste and Languishing upon the Vitals of the Body Natural, and do not Atheism and Prophaneness, and a contemptuous Violation of the Divine Laws, as effectually Dissolve and Enfeeble the Constitution of the Body Politick ? And to add but one more to these melancholly Views, no ordinary expedient can put a Stop to the growth of publick Calamities and Evils of the last Importance, where Schism, Faction, and a private Good have divided a People's Judgment, Affections, and Interests, and thereby have given Encouragement

ment and Opportunities to their Adversaries, of taking their Advantages.

And therefore to Advance the Good and Happiness of Mankind, which are best secured in the Beauty, Order and Harmony of Government, Christianity prohibits all sorts of Vice and Immorality, as the Causes of publick as well as private Calamities, and which nothing can put a stop to, but a timely and resolute breaking off our Sins by a regular uniform Practice of undisguised Vertue, without asking our vain Lusts and exorbitant Passions whether they are willing or no.

II. Another Method for the Preservation of Peace and Unity, is Content and Acquiescence in our several Callings and Capacities, not meddling in those Things which do not immediately Concern us, but keeping our Place and Station, and exercising ourselves in the Employment to which Providence, or our own Choice has consigned us.

A great part of every Man's present Happiness, and which therefore in the first place he ought to be chiefly concerned about, is the Ease and Tranquillity of his Mind, which being an active and busie Principle, and always pursuing some Object or other on which to fix all those Distractions will necessarily follow the Choice of a bad one, which are the constant Effects of Curiosity and Mistake.

As every Man of sober thinking must needs confess the End of Government to be the Preservation of publick Peace and Order; so it requires no great Nicety of Judgment, to observe, that as this End is best secured by the Sobriety and Diligence of its Members in the Duties of their particular Callings; so that all Tumults and Disorders are the natural Effects of Idleness and Impertinency, and that as there is not a more *Miserable*, so not a more *Dangerous* Person in the State than He who is Idle, and neglects the Business of his Calling For 'tis the Slothful Person that is at Leisure to contrive Mischiefs, sow Divisions, form Parties

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raising Jealousies, and poyson Peoples Minds with groundless Fears and Apprehensions; whereas He who is Content and Industrious in his Affairs, and confines his Mind within the Compass of his own Sphere, will never want Business enough at Home to exercise both his Thoughts and his Senses, to keep Him from the impertinent rude Behaviour, of concerning himself with other Men's Business; and so consequently from the Danger as well as Scandal, to which they are daily exposed, who are Lazy, and have nothing to do.

For so I shall always judge of that Man, who having no settled and lawful Employment for the Exercise of his Time and Faculties, or if he has, neglects the proper Duties of it, and thrusting himself into other Men's Concerns, becomes impertinently Curious in Things out of his Sphere; which is a sawcy and pragmatistical Behaviour, condemned by the Apostle under the Reproachful Character of a Busie-Body, *who rambles from House to House*, is always beating his Head about Politicks, in mending and reforming the State, and in spreading and encouraging those Lyes and false Reports which Idleness first Invents, and then turns into Sedition.

For that is plainly the design of such slothful and discontented Spirits, who being weary of the Stations in which they already are, affect to be in those for which they are not fit, and wanting Peace and Quiet at Home, they spitefully endeavour to prevent and disturb it Abroad, thinking to give Proof that they have greater Abilities than other Men, by shewing that they have less Wit and Modesty.

None can deny, when they see People to be capacious, and causelessly Angry, making it their Study to perplex their own and other Men's Consciences, by corrupt Constructions of wholesome Laws and false Representations of the most glorious Actions, but that it relishes something of a Self-Interest, and looks liker a Design of Quarrelling, than an hearty desire

of Union, which is equally violated by private Discontents, and by publick Hostilities.

For how can it be helped, but that Quarrels and Dissentions must ensue, where there is no Order ; and what Order, whilst Men break their Ranks, and neglecting their own private Duty, spend their Time about Publick Affairs, in setting up a Court of Judicature in their Breasts, and then fetching in all Transactions both at Home and Abroad under its Cognizance ; as if every Man had a liberty of *doing* and *saying even what they lust*, (Ps. 73. 7.) were under no restraint, either from Conscience or Civility, but were created in the World, as the *Leviathan* was in the great Deep, only to take their Pastime therein, and to make themselves chearful at other People's Cost and Sorrow.

This, I say, can't but ruffle and discompose the Course of Things, create Disturbances amongst Men and is directly contrary to that prudent and gentle Management of our selves, which our blessed Lord recommends under the curious Hieroglyphick of a *Serpent* and a *Dove*, and is a tacit exprobration of those petulant and ambitious Spirits, whose destructive and ill-natur'd Projects are too plain a Demonstration, that they have neither the *Wisdom* of the *one*, nor the *Immaculance* of the *other*.

For certainly were they possess'd with either, they would find it their Interest as well as Duty, to be intent on their own proper Business, to keep their Station and Rank, tho' it should not be that of a General or Privy-Counsellor ; and to enjoy the blessed Fruit of Government, without the Thorns and Vexations that are the inseparable Adjuncts of it.

And it should seem to drag a long Train of Mischiefs after it, if the wise Constitutions of Government, and useful Settlements in Church and State, were presented to be sacrificed to the Scruples and Caprice of some bold and discontented Person, who may either be

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blindfold by mistaken Interests, or for want of being otherwise employ'd, has fall'n into ill Acquaintance, and suffer'd himself to be led into groundless Prejudices and Aversions : This would be as absurd in the Practice, as 'tis dangerous in its Consequences, and he that endeavours at it, but miscarries in the Attempt, will only gain the wretched Satisfaction of falling a Sacrifice to his own Folly, and the World will be apt to impute his Afflictions to his Vanity, and to conclude that he *merited* his Punishment before he *suffered* it.

And indeed the largest Charity would hardly excuse so perverse a Temper, could we possibly but look into that World of Mischiefs, which such Pragmatical Froward Persons draw after them, who therefore are deservedly *avoided* by all good Men, as infectious and scandalous ; and by all wise Governments *punished*, as unsafe and dangerous. For it has been justly observed, that most of your Disturbances in CHURCH and STATE, have owed their Rise to Persons of this sort of Character, Envy and Censure being the genuine Off-spring of Pride, and Men being too apt to hate where they cannot imitate.

And therefore one would fancy, that *Pharaoh* acted upon a very Wise Political Principle, tho' ill apply'd to the *Hebrews*, when he refused to let them go, and sacrifice to their God : For he suspected that their Pretence to Worshipping was but to conceal their Idleness, and that their being *slothful in Business* made them talk so much of *serving the Lord*.

So that were there no Divine Command, this is sufficient when duly considered, to convince Men of the Necessity of not going beyond their Bounds, nor meddling in Things too high for them ; of being as active and industrious as possible in their own Affairs, but not to meddle in those of the State and Government, which do not belong to many, and which very few do rightly understand ; of discountenancing all such

Devilish and ill-laid Projects as tend towards *Schism* and *Faction*, and seeking to promote Unity and Concord by such Rules, as have a tendency thereto, and endeavouring by an universal Acquiescence and Contentment in our respective Conditions of Life, an entire Submission to the Divine Dispensations, and a great Probation of Mind, and Holiness of Life, to obtain that serene and happy Temper, that is not only inoffensive, but Obliging.

Having thus dispatched the two first Things proposed from the Text, I am in the *Third* and *Last* Place, to conclude the whole, in a Word or two, with reference to the Occasion of our present Meeting.

3. It was one of King *Solomon's* wise sayings, grounded upon Reasons of Eternal Truth, and confirmed by the Experience and Observation of all Ages, That when the Righteous are in Authority, the People receive joyce. A just and religious Prince, is certainly the greatest Blessing Heaven can in Goodness bestow upon a People, as He is God's Vice-gerent and Representative here on Earth, through the Influence of his noble Example, the God-like Qualities of his Mind and Coercion of his Excellent Laws, to maintain the Order, Equity, Right, and Harmony of the World by securing every Man's Property, and protecting every Man's Life, by making the Interests of his People his *own*, and engaging his Power and Authority for their *Good*, by advancing the Honour of Religion and discouraging Prophaneness and Impiety, by promoting Honesty, Truth, and Learning, and beating down and exterminating all manner of Vice and Immorality, and especially that Impudence of *Atheism* that has given it so great a Vogue in the World.

But this is at present the Happiness of the People of *Great Britain*, under the Auspicious Reign and Administration of our Sovereign Lady Queen *ANNE*, whose admirable Wisdom, exemplary Piety, steady Admini-

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stration of Justice, and other Princely Virtues, with which she is Adorned, have better'd the Age she lives in, are an *Instruction* as well as *Glory* to her Subjects, and do at once both attract their *Love*, and excite their *Imitation*.

As no Prince can possibly merit a greater Honour, than in being heartily Concerned for the Glory of God, and the Good of his Church; so to be sure the truest Happiness of a People must lie in the free and undisturbed Exercise of Religion, and in the quiet Possession of their natural Rights and Properties: And both these great and noble Ends, are the result of that Royal Wisdom and Power entrusted by God to Her Majesty, who in all Her Actions, aiming at Publick Good, has taken all the necessary Methods that human Prudence can suggest, to drive away and beat down Vice on the one hand; and on the other, to keep *Po- pery* and *Arbitrary Power* from returning, and giving us any more trouble.

So that now we have a Prospect of a long and lasting continuance of our Holy Reformed Religion, the free and undisturbed Execution of Laws, and therewith of all true and desirable Liberty.

And since Things are thus disposed and brought to pass, by the Divine Wisdom and Determination, that we may be very happy if we will ourselves, we ought to be very Careful, that we do not, by our Factions, Discontents, and Unchristian Divisions, disturb so flourishing and well-settled a Government, nor discompose the Rest of so Excellent a Queen, who by her great Wisdom and indefatigable Industry has given us Peace and Quiet, and thereby seems to have derived an additional Title to that August Throne, which now she fills with all the Worth and Lustre, that can possibly render a Prince both Great and Good.

And

And if we think it a Happiness to live under such a Queen and Government, let us improve it to the Noblest and Highest Ends we are capable of attaining to, studying in our several Stations and Places, to worship God, as we may, with Order, Decency, and Uniformity; to behave ourselves with an entire Obedience to her Majesty's just Laws, and the most profound Respect and Veneration to her Sacred Person; and by an unanimous Agreement and good Will amongst ourselves, prosecuting our One General and Publick Good, that our Enemies may take notice of our Unanimity and Zeal for common Safety, and be convinced, we are *Resolved* to be Happy, and at the same time that they envy the *Safety*, they may be dazzled at the *Glory* of the Nation, and whilst they grieve at the Establishment of Religion, may be comforted with its *Lustre*, that so our Constitution both in Church and State may descend pure and entire to our latest Posterity, and by them be received according to their Worth and Excellence.

And to these Endeavours, let us join our good Wishes, that our Gracious Queen may still continue to Reign in the Hearts of her Friends, and to trample on the Necks of her Enemies. That the Almighty would ever guard her Sacred Person, and prosper her pious Designs both at Home and Abroad, that neither Faction nor Irreligion may lurk among us to disturb the Peace of the State, or the Harmony of the best Establish'd Church in the World.

'Tis almost demonstrably true, that nothing can now, in all human probability make us unhappy, but our own imprudent Divisions and Animosities, of which we have been frequently Admonished, and warned against from the Throne, both by our present Sovereign, and our late glorious Deliverer, King *William* of Immortal Memory, and by both exhorted most pathetically to that Peace and Unity amongst ourselves, which alone can protect us from *Popery* and

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Slavery, defeat the Attempts and Designs of the *Pre-
tender*, and secure the Protestant Succession to these
Kingdoms in the most *Serene and Illustrious House of
Hanover*.

But if neither Admonitions nor Considerations will
work upon us, but we will be still Censuring and
thinking hard of one another, will be distinguishing
Parties by Names of Reproach and Ignominious
Characters, if there be any found to obstruct publick
Good from a private Resentment, and Revenge personal
Discontent upon the general Tranquillity, what
can be the Issue of such imprudent Doings, but the
Ruin of the Community, by bringing all those
Evils upon us, which the Enemy despairs of doing
without us.

And therefore as we regard the Glory of God, the
Honour of the Queen, the Prosperity of our Country,
the Security of our Protestant Worship, and the Pro-
sperity of our Government, let us lay aside all our
Heats and Animosities, and Sacrifice private Picque,
and private Interest, to publick and general Peace and
Safety.

To this end, let us bear with one another's Infirmi-
ties; let us give some Allowances to the Weaknesses
of those who are misled by the Force of Education,
and the Biass of vulgar Prejudices. Let us study to
gain upon one another by Gentleness and Meekness.
Let us have the Horrors of an Inquisition, Fire, and
other Cruelties of *Popery* more in our Thoughts, and
from thence be excited to unite against our common
Danger, and not be still quarrelling about some less
Essential and Important Matters.

In a Word, let us be careful to send up our most
servent and Affectionate Prayers to the Throne of
Grace, for the long Life, Health, and Happiness of our
Queen, beseeching God that all her Just and Honour-
able Designs may ever be Successful, for the Glory of
God,

God, the Good of her own People, and the Bene-
 of Europe.

That she may live to be the Preserver of our Liberty
 and Property, as well as the Defender of our Faith and
 Church; and, after a Late and Happy Reign here
 may be received up to Reign with God in Eternal
 Glory. *Amen.*

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